

**SPEAKING NOTES
THE HONOURABLE NOËL A. KINSELLA
SPEAKER OF THE SENATE**

**ON THE OCCASION OF THE ANNUAL MEETING WITH
THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS**

**KINGSTON, ONTARIO
JUNE 18, 2010**

Speaker Milliken,
Members of the Diplomatic Corps,
Honourable Parliamentarians,
Deputy Mayor Schmolka,
Mesdames et Messieurs:

It is a pleasure to be here with you in Kingston on this beautiful summer afternoon. On behalf of the Senate of Canada and in my own name, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all members of the Diplomatic Corps, both those who are here today and those who were unable to join us, for your efforts throughout the year in promoting good relations between Canada and the countries you represent.

During my four and a half years as Speaker of the Senate, I have gained a greater appreciation of the importance of international relationships, and how helpful it is to have representatives of other nations immediately at hand. From facilitating good communications to helping to deal with the problems that inevitably arise, having good people on the ground is a key element to success.

In addition to the normal diplomatic connections, I am not sure everyone fully appreciates just how much direct contact there is between parliamentary bodies and how often members of the diplomatic corps are called upon to help with the arrangements.

Throughout the year, Canadian parliamentarians meet with delegations of our counterparts from other countries, both when they come to Canada and when we travel to meet with them. As Speaker, it has been my privilege to lead a number of parliamentary delegations abroad. There are also 12 associations that work at the multilateral or the bilateral level, four official interparliamentary groups, and numerous unofficial friendship groups.

Taken together, these various activities and organizations show the extent to which Canadian parliamentarians are involved in fostering good relations with our international partners. That interest and involvement is generally reciprocated and I can't overemphasize the importance of these exchanges.

Among other things, each country's system of governance has its own particular way of functioning. Some have been around for hundreds of years and have evolved complex procedures. Others are of more recent origin and are still working out the best way of doing things. No matter how long a system has been in operation, there are still ways to improve and we all share best practices.

By meeting with our counterparts, we are able to pass on our experiences and help one another to improve our respective systems. In the process of these encounters at differing levels, we learn about the challenges others face.

As members of the diplomatic corps, you help make these contacts run smoothly. I know that many hours of hard work are involved in setting up an

exchange visit, and without your help they would be difficult if not impossible. Accordingly, I wish to thank you and acknowledge the efforts you make both when your delegations come to Canada and when ours plan to visit your countries.

This reception is not just a way of showing our appreciation; it is an opportunity for all of us to get to know one another a bit better. Personal contacts and links formed in a slightly less formal setting such as this can be instrumental in resolving issues on future occasions.

It is also an opportunity to spend some time in the City of Kingston and the beautiful Thousand Islands. This is a place where a visitor can gain a sense of Canadian history. Here, where Lake Ontario drains into the St. Lawrence River and the Rideau Canal begins on its way up to Ottawa, many currents of Canadian history come together. Over the years, Kingston has been a First Nations settlement, a French fort, a British military base, a haven for United Empire Loyalists fleeing the American Revolution, and the first capital of Canada. Today, it is home to the Speaker of the House of Commons.

As Speaker of the Senate, I have come to appreciate how important it is to understand not only our own history, but also something of the history of other countries. Our international exchanges provide us with a way of learning about each other and improving our understanding of each other. It is through the development of such relations that we aspire toward a more peaceful world for all.

In closing, I would like to thank Speaker Milliken for being our guide in his home constituency, Deputy Mayor Schmolka for her hospitality, and all the members of the Diplomatic Corps for your dedication throughout the year.